

Robth Gouy

The Qualifications and Duties of Ministers.

A
SERMON
PREACH'D AT
T A U N T O N,
May the 27th, 1708.
BEFORE AN
ASSEMBLY
OF THE
United Ministers
OF
Somerset and Devon.

Publish'd at the Request of the Assembly.

By ISAAC GILLING.

² TIM. iv. v.

Make full Proof of thy Ministry.

E X O N: Printed by Sam. Farley, Sold by the Book-sellers of Exon, and Henry Chalklin in Taunton, 1708.

ИОМЯЕ

И О Т А У Т

БРІТІШ МУЗЕУМ



TO THE
United Ministers
O F
Somerset, Devon, &c.

Who Compos'd the late ASSEMBLY at
TAUNTON.

Reverend and dear Brethren !

*A*T Your Unanimous Request this Plain Sermon comes Abroad in the World. The Subject of it is Great and Weighty, worthy our most Serious Regard. It recommends to such as are Engag'd in the Sacred Office, or intended for it, such Qualifications, and such a Course of Life, as may procure Respect to their Persons, and render their Labours useful to the World. The Freedom I have taken in delivering my Thoughts, I hope, will not be Offensive. I am willingly Ignorant of all the little Arts of Insinuation ; and judge it very unfit, that We, who are closely to Reprove others, should Flatter one another.

'T IS no small Priviledge to have Liberty to meet together, that we may Excite each other to our Ministerial Work, maintain Peace and Love among our selves, and do what we can to preserve it in the Congregations under our Care. Some, who Envy us our Liberty, and the Assurances given us by Her MAJESTY, That She will Inviolably Maintain it, being utter Strangers to our Principles and Temper, have made it their Business to Represent us as Implacable Enemies

to Monarchy ; and have not forborn to Suggest, that our Assemblies are design'd to promote Faction and Disloyalty : But, while we can Appeal to the Searcher of Hearts that we sincerely desire the Prosperity of the QUEEN, and the Good of the Nation, we need not much Regard such foward Remarks, and angry Reflections, which appear plainly to proceed from an Uncharitable and Ill-natur'd Spirit.

HOWEVER, let these Causeless Jealousies make us more Watchful and Circumspect ; That by Well-doing we may put to silence the Ignorance of foolish Men : Commending our selves to every Man's Conscience, in the sight of GOD. Let our unwearied Diligence in the Work of our LORD, our fervent Love to Souls, our untainted Loyalty to our SOVEREIGN, and our inoffensive Carriagetowards our Brethren of the Church of England, plead for us ; that those who endeavour to Blacken and Defame us, may be Alsham'd, having no Evil Thing to say of us. Let us not forsake the ASSEMBLING our selves together, as the Manner of some is, but Exhort and Provoke one another to Love, and to good Works : That by our Simplicity, and Godly Sincerity, we may lay up in Store for our selves a good Foundation for present Comfort and future Joy. This is the Hearty Prayer of,

Reverend SIRS,

Your Affectionate Brother,
And Fellow-Servant,

Isaac Gilling

A
SERMON
Preach'd before an
Assembly of Ministers
I N
T A U N T O N.

COLOSS. IV. xvii.

And say to Archippus, Take heed to the Ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

THese Words contain St. Paul's Injunction to the People at *Colossi*, to advise *Archippus* their Minister, faithfully to discharge his Office. Good Ministers are in danger of growing remiss and negligent: In such a case, their People, instead of backbiting and reproaching them; ought, (with due respect to their Persons and Function) to exhort them to Fidelity and Diligence. They should not flatter, and sooth 'em in their Faults; they should not vilify, and slander them behind their Backs; but go to them, and excite them to their Duty.

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WHATEVER was the Occasion of this Advice, 'tis very suitable to the Occasion of our present MEETING : (And the Meetings of Ministers have been hitherto thought, by the most able, pious, and peaceable Divines, very useful to promote the Great Ends of our Ministry :) For if the Apostle would have the *Colossians* say thus to *Archippus*, it can't but be very proper for us, (my Brethren) to call upon one another, *To take heed that we fulfil our Ministry.*

I shall not vex the Words, nor crumble them into Parts ; but from the main Scope of them, insist upon this

DOCTRINE,

THAT it is the Duty of every faithful MINISTER, to take heed that he fulfil the Ministry, which he hath received in the Lord.

IN speaking to which, I shall

1. SHEW what it is to receive our Ministry *in the Lord.*
2. WHAT Qualifications are requir'd of them that would receive, or ingage in the Ministry.
3. WHAT it is to fulfil the Ministry: And how those who are qualify'd for it, and have receiv'd it, should take heed to fulfil it.
4. CONCLUDE with some Particular Advice.

I.

I am to shew what is to receive our Ministry *in the Lord.*

THE Phrase, *in the Lord*, ἐν κυρίῳ, is the same with *διὰ κυρίου*, *By the Lord.* Faithful Ministers have

a Trust committed to them by Christ: They receive their Ministry *By the Lord*. For,

1st, OUR Lord hath Instituted this Office. Christ the King and Head of the Church, hath appointed his Ministers to publish the Glad Tidings of Salvation. As he call'd some *Extraordinary Officers, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists*, to preach the Everlasting Gospel, and to confirm it by *Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost**: So he appointed † *Pastors, and Teachers*, as his *Standing Officers*, to continue to the End of the World.

2^{dly}, OUR Lord *qualifies Persons* for the Ministry, and *Inclines* them to it. All Ministerial *Gifts* and *Graces* are from Christ: He doth, by his Spirit, powerfully and effectually move some to undertake this High, this Difficult, this Despised Office: He fits them for the Discharge of it; making them *able Ministers of the || New-Testament*.

3^{dly}, OUR Lord gives faithful Ministers their *Commission*. From Christ they receive their Instructions, and from him they derive their Authority. They receive their Ministry *By Man*; not *From Man*, but *From Christ*. Man Tries, Approves, and Invests: Christ Qualifies, Inclines, and Sends. He *enables*, and *puts into the + Ministry*: What is done in his Name, and by his Order, He will own. Christ sends those, who are sent, according to the Rules of the Gospel.

II.

I am to shew what *Qualifications* are requir'd of them that would receive, or ingage in the Ministry.

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1st,

* Heb. 2. 4. † Ephes. 4. 11, 12. || 2 Cor. 3. 6.
‡ 1 Tim. 1. 12.

1st, 'TIS requisite that they have good Natural Parts and Abilities. They who are dull, or of weak and shallow Heads, are no way fit for this Office. If therefore such as are intrusted with the Education of Youth, find any intended for the Pulpit, to want Capacity, or to have clumsy Wits ; they shou'd give speedy notice of it, that their Time, and their Friends Money may not be lost ; but they may be dispos'd of in some other Course of Life, in which they may be useful : For if all Comers be educated, and employ'd, the Ministry must unavoidably fall into the greatest Contempt.

THEY have mean Thoughts of our Blessed Lord, and of this High and Holy Calling, who think such of their Children as are of the ripest Wits, an Offering too good for the Altar : But if any of their Sons be either a *Dunce*, or *Deform'd*, he is doom'd to the Pulpit ; according to that of the Epigrammatist,

**Si duri puer ingenii videtur*

Præconem facias, —

which many Parents English thus ; *Tho' he be a Dull Boy, he'll serve well enough for a Parson.*

2dly, THAT Persons may be qualify'd for the Ministry, 'tis highly requisite, that they have a Learned Education : That they get a good Stock of Knowledge, and be train'd up in the Schools of the Prophets. I will not say 'tis of Absolute Necessity ; but certainly Learning is of great use to a Minister, who is not like to discharge his Office well, without Skill in the Tongues, and in Human Arts and Sciences. All sober Christians among us seem now to be agreed, that such as are design'd for the Ministry,

stry, ought to go through a Course of Learning ; and, in a special manner, to apply themselves to the Study of *Divinity* ; and to be well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures. The Jewish *Learning*, *History*, *Logick*, and *Philosophy*, are good Helps to the right dividing the Word of Truth. They are ignorant *Enthusiasts*, who decry Human Learning, and would have Ministers burn all Books but their Bibles.

THE Jews had Schools for the Instruction of Youth. The Jewish Writers think that *Shem* formed the first regular School, and set up some special Places for the Profession and Propagation of * Learning : By the Tents of *Shem*, Gen. 9. 27. they understand the Schools of *Shem*. Where 'tis said, that *Rebekah* went to enquire of the LORD, when the Children struggled within her, Gen. 25. 22. The Jerusalem Targum expounds it thus, She went to the School of *Shem* the † Great. 'Tis an Assertion of the Rabbi's, That *Jacob* studied in the Schools of *Shem* and *Heber*. The Hill of God, 1 Sam. 10. 5. is thought to have a School or College, as well as a High Place : And the Company of Prophets, to be young Students, train'd up in the Study of the Law, and in Singing Psalms of Praise || to God. At *Naoth*, in *Ramah*, was another College, or School of Prophetic Education ; where we find *Samuel* standing, as appointed over the Company of the Prophets, 1 Sam. 19. 20. He was President of the College, who disciplin'd those young Scholars, and train'd them up to those Preparatory Qualifications, which might

* Isaac Abendana's Discourses, c. 5. p. 129.
worth in Loc. || Jackson.

† Ains-

might dispose them for * Prophecy. In 2 Kings 22. 14. we read of a College in *Jerusalem*, where *Huldah* the Prophetess dwelt. 2 Kings 3. 11. *Elisha* is said to have poured Water on the Hands of *Elijah*, as his Disciple. Frequent Mention is made of the *Disciples*, or *Sons of the Prophets*. In 2 Kings 2. 2, 4. *Elijah* before his Translation, visits the Colleges at *Bethel* and *Jericho*. *Elisha* succeeds his Tutor, as in Prophecying, so in instructing the Sons of the Prophets; whom we find sitting before him, 2 Kings 4. 38. as his Pupils; and desiring leave of him to build a more spacious College at *Jordan*, 2 Kings 6. 1. when their Habitation was too strait for them.

YOU see what care was taken for the Education of those who were to instruct the People, in the *Jewish Church*: And I can't see why a Learned, and Religious Education should be less necessary among us. The *Apostles* and *Disciples* had, (besides the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit) our Saviour's Personal Instructions.

CANDIDATES for the Ministry ought to study hard, that they may be well furnish'd with Learning; nor should any presume to enter upon Preaching, before they have a Readiness in Interpreting, and Applying the Scriptures: And such as are in the Ministry, ought to grow in Knowledge. Some of us entered young, and raw upon our Work; it therefore concerns us, by hard Study, and Diligence, to repair any Defects in our Education. And, whereas the whole Body of *Dissenters* suffer upon the Account of some Illiterate Persons, who have heretofore crept into the *Ministry*; we, ought to

* *Smith's Select Discourses of Prophecy*, c. 9. p. 253.

to be very strict in Examining, and cautious in Approving such as propose themselves, that we may not be thought to Countenance or Encourage those who are not well qualify'd.

3dly. HE that would obtain the Approbation of God, ought to have sincere and unfeigned Piety. Divine Grace is necessary, as well as Natural Capacity, and Acquir'd Learning. A Minister of Good Parts, and great Knowledge, who wants Holiness, is, as that Incomparable Minister, Mr. Joseph Allein * saith, ' Like Nebuchadnezzar's Image, which had a Head of Gold, and Feet of Clay.' He is never like to take heed to his Ministry, who doth not take heed to himself, 1 Tim. 4. 16. Our First Care should be to save our selves, to see that the good Work be wrought in our own Souls. Gifts and Learning are requisite for the Edification of others : Grace is necessary, that we may not perish our selves.

WO be to us (Sirs!) if we be Strangers to that God, that Christ, that Holiness, which we Preach to others. If we do by our Knowledge in Divine Things (to use the Words of the late Pious Mr. Harford †) as Vintners do by their Wines, which they draw for their Guests, and not for themselves. 'Tis sad to think, that precious Souls should go to the Place of Torment from under our Pulpit: But how dreadful will our Condemnation be, if we, who conduct others to the *Inheritance in Light*, should our selves be cast into Outer Darkness?

BESIDES, they are never like to be hearty in their Endeavours to promote the Salvation of others,

* Alarm, p. 36.

† M. S. Letter to a young Minister.

others, who have not secur'd their own. 'Tis possible, I grant, for Foolish Parents to beget Wise Children; for Bad Ministers to promote the Spiritual Good of their Hearers. God is able to feed his Servants, as once he did his Prophet, by a *Raven*: But commonly he uses those as *Seals*, to impress his || Image upon the Hearts of others, who have it ingraven upon their own.

III.

I proceed now to inquire, what it is to *Fulfil the Ministry*; and how they who are qualify'd for it, and have receiv'd it, should take heed that they *fulfil it*.

TO *fulfil our Ministry*, is faithfully to discharge all the Duties which belong to us, as Ministers: To fill up all the Parts of our Office, observing the *Apostolical Canons*, and *Injunctions*, in order to the Promoting the Interest of Christ, and the Salvation of Souls. I shall mention some *Ministerial Duties* which we ought to perform, in order to the fulfilling our Ministry.

First, WE ought to *preach the Word*, 2 Tim. 4. 2. An unpreaching Minister is as great a Solocism, as a Bell without a Clapper, or a Cryer without a Voice. We should *study to shew our selves approved unto God*, *Workmen that need not to be ashamed*, rightly dividing the *Word of Truth*, 2 Tim. 2. 15. We who are out of the *Establish'd Church*, have no Honourable Titles, nor External Advantages to recommend us. We think we have Scripture and Reason on our side: But the Justice of our Cause will not secure

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|| Mr. N. Taylor Fun. for Mr. Mayo, p. 25.

us from Contempt, if we fail in the Discharge of this part of our Office.

THERE are several things which deserve our Care, with respect to our Preaching.

I. WE ought to Speak the Things which become SOUND Doctrine, Tit. 2. 1. A faithful Steward will give wholesome Food, the Sincere Milk of the Word. We should in our Doctrine shew Uncorruptness, Tit. 2. 7. And not ἐπεγδιασκαλεῖν Teach any other Doctrine, than what is according to Truth and Godliness, 1 Tim. 1. 3. A good Minister will not dare to set the Stamp of Divine Authority upon his own Fancies, add his Dreams to God's Word, nor mix his Chaff with Gods Wheat, Jer. 23. 28, 29. He will not shun to declare, unto his People, all the Council of God: Nor keep back anything which is profitable for them. He Proves, and Illustrates his Doctrine by the Holy Scriptures, that what he delivers may come with Power and Efficacy upon Mens Consciences; as one who knows what a mighty Reverence all Serious Christians have for the Oracles of God. He is careful to bring Matter out of his Text, and to make his Sermon upon it: And does not first compose his Discourse, and then press a Text to it's service. His Doctrinal, and Practical Inferences, are not forc'd: Nor does he Ramble, and Hale into his Discourses what is impertinent, and foreign to his Subject; but entertains his Hearers with what flows Naturally, or is drawn easily out of the Wells of Salvation. He cites Texts of Scripture not barely by his Concordance or Memory, but with Judgment, not by Number, but by Weight.

II. WE ought to insist most upon weighty and necessary Points. The People should hear from us Words whereby they may be Saved. Our Texts should be Proper, and well chosen: Not such as seem to

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have *Humour* * in them ; or that must be long wrought upon, before they are understood. We should frequently discourse of the great Doctrines and Duties of the Gospel, the *Trinity*, the *Incarnation*, and *Satisfaction of Christ*, *Regeneration*, *Faith*, *Repentance*, and *Holiness*.

HE that would approve himself to God, will not λογουμαχεῖν, 2 Tim. 2. 14. *Strive about Words.* He doth not feed his People with Wind, barren Notions; nor with the dry Husks of Curious Questions; Neither doth he give them Stones, needless Controversies instead of Bread: But Nourishes them with the Words of Faith, and of good Doctrine. He knows that Controversies in the Pulpit are the food of Contention; and is convinc'd that the Prince of Peace did not come into the World to fill Mens heads with meer Speculations, to kindle a fire of contentious Disputes, or to inflame their Spirits with angry Debates; but to seek and Save lost Souls. The way to Heaven which He Taught, is Plain and Easy, if we have but Honest Hearts: Nor do we want much Skill in *Criticism*, or *School-Distinctions*, to understand what we must do to be Saved.

THEY are not like to Fulfil their Ministry, who puzzle the Heads of their Hearers with New Schemes; Scare them with Harsh Doctrines, or obtrude upon their Belief such nice, and unnecessary Points as are above their Capacities, instead of giving them Something to make them wiser, and better: Nor do they behave themselves as they ought, in the House of God, who open and lock up Heaven with the Key of their private Sentiments, making their Darling Notions the *Shibboleth* by which

* *Pastoral Care.* p. 217.

which they try, and doom People to their Eternal State.

WHAT a shame is it, that Sermons should be turn'd into *Invectives* against *CEREMONIES*, or *Declamations* against *SCHISM*? That Passionate Conformists should rail at Conscientious Dissenters as Hypocrites, and Humoursom People; or Peevish Dissenters revile those of the Establish'd Church as Formalists, and Strangers to the Power of Godliness? That UNITED BRETHREN shonld throw Dirt upon one another? That any among us should go about to set up their own Judgments as the Standard of Truth, and to Silence, or lay aside as useless Men of Parts, and Piety, who are Sound in the Faith; because they will not Subscribe their *ORTHODOX PHRASES*? And this, when Multitudes of our Hearers, on all sides, are grossly Ignorant, or notoriously Careless of their precious Souls.

IF St. Paul, or St. John, St. Basil, or St. Chrysostom, or any of the glorious Lights of the Primitive Church, should arise out of their Graves, and find Christians, Reform'd Christians, thus quarrelling about Modes and Circumstances, about Nations and Phrases, how would they be fill'd with Surprize and Wonder, with deep Sorrow, and just Indignation, to behold the degenerate State of Christianity in our Age!

HE therefore whose Heart is fill'd with Love to Christ, and Compassion to Souls, will study to promote Peace and Holiness. He will not be too Dogmatical in what is not clearly reveal'd; nor will he amuse his People with his peculiar Opinions, in things remote from the Foundation. He does not love to take a great deal of pains to little pur-

pose : Like a sort of Spirits one * speaks of, who haunt Mines. They seem to be very busy in digging, breaking and drawing up the Oar ; but when they are gone, the Labourers find nothing done. Thus do some Preachers quote Authors, dwell long upon Words and Phrases in which is no difficulty, divide and subdivide their Texts in Logical Terms, keep ado about the Originals and Versions, summon a Jury of Expositors, insist much upon the least Circumstances of a Text, they argue, raise Objections, make new Discoveries : But with all this pompous Shew of Learning, their Hearers receive no Benefit, nor is the Work of their Salvation at all promoted.

O Blessed Prince of Peace ! What Strangers are they to the Wisdom which is from above, and to thy Gracious Design in coming into the World, who will not be quiet themselves, longer than they are drawing the Saw of Contention, nor let others alone, unless they receive their Dictates as Oracles : But act, as if they were sent to proclaim War, and alarm the Church, about such things as are either unreveal'd, or in which the most Learned, and Pious have different Apprehensions ?

III. WE ought to Preach *Plainly*, suiting our Method and Stile to the Capacity of our Hearers.

OUR Method should be clear and intelligible. We should contrive our Discourses so, that every part may have its right place. Some huddle and jumble

* *Geo. Agricola, De Animantibus Subterraneis*, p. 502
Hi vagantur in puteis & cuniculis : Et quum nihil agant,
in omni laborum genere videntur se exercere : quasi modo
fodiant venas, modo in vase effundant id quod effossum est,
modo versent machinam tractoriam.

jumble many things together : Their Sermons are a meer *Chaos*; a rude, and undigested heap of Matter, without Order. If we study the Profit of our Hearers, we ought to use such a Method, as that they may perceive the Connexion, and Dependance of one thing upon another : Not aiming to handle all Texts exactly the same way, and making a Set of Reasons, Uses, and Motives serve indifferently upon all Occasions; but accommodating our Method and Matter to our Subject.

OUR *Style* should be Easy and Familiar : Plain, that we may be understood by the Unlearned and Ignorant ; Proper and Natural, that we may not be despised by the Learned and Intelligent. We should avoid Bombast Words, and abhor Jes's and Jingles, Puns and Quibbles: The Use of which is deservedly censur'd as a horrid Profanation of Sacred Things in the Pulpit, and exploded as Boyish Trifling, and Contemptible Fooling any where else. We should labour after a convincing, unaffected sort of Oratory : And in our common Discourses in the Pulpit, use Words and Phrases which are not much out of the usual way of Conversation.

‘ Tis hard (faith * one) to speak so plainly, as to make half the Common People understand us. The Language of Scholars, and Men of Liberal Education, is much different from that of the Vulgar. A Multitude of neater Words insensibly insinuate themselves ; and, by use, become familiar, and natural to us : Which, tho' they are Plain to us, are not so to the Illiterate.

THE RE is a Closeness and Strength of Reasoning, which, tho' very acceptable to Men of Parts

* Ep. Wetenhal's Gift of Prayer, c. 3. p. 67.

Parts and Learning, is too elaborate for Common Understandings : And there is an Affected Fineness of Expression, which does not at all become the Pulpit : 'Tis (as * One calls it) like stroaking the Peoples Consciences with a Feather dipt in Oyl. Accurate Definitions in School-Terms, and all *Uncommon Latin and Greek Words*, tho' put in an *English Dress*, are more apt to amuse than to edify ; more likely to make the Hearers stare, and think the Preacher Learned, than to make them Wise and Holy. A Spruce, Quaint Stile, and a Flaunting Eloquence, do not sound well out of the Mouth of an Ambassador of Christ : And 'tis often seen, that when the Language of a Sermon is Rich and Florid, the Sense is Poor and Mean.

THERE is, on the other Hand, a loose and careless way of Talking, which some, by delivering their Sermons without Notes, fall into : And finding it easy to themselves, and plausible to the injudicious, are tempted to continue in. There is also a *Clownish, Slovenly* way of speaking, which some like, as being Plain and Familiar : But this is a Familiarity which breeds Contempt. The frequent use of *Vulgar Proverbs, Homely Similitudes, Ridiculous Phrases*, and telling *Idle Stories*. is indecent, unsuitable to the Majesty of Divine Truths, and ungrateful to Men of good Sense ; who can't hear such Stuff without shrinking, and blushing for the Preacher. Again, There is an obscure, perplex'd, crabbed Stile. Some are pleas'd with their being intricate, and take pains not to be understood.

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* Bp. Stillingfleet.

WE ought to avoid these Extremes. Our Stile should be clean and Smooth, and our Words Proper. Tho' a Taudry Dres looks ill on Christ's Ministers; yet they should not appear in publick, in Tatter'd and Ragged Cloaths: A Manly Simplicity is most taking, and Plainness is the best Eloquence, and most forcible. We are Debtors both to the wise, and to the Unwise, and ought to condescend to those Scholars in our Lord's School, who are of the Lowest Form, not thinking it much to teach the Babes in Christ their A, B, C.

IV. WE ought to speak * *a Word in Season*, suit-ing our Discourses to the Necessities of our Hearers: that we may rouze and awaken the Sleepy and Secure, † *warn the Unruly, comfort the Feeble Minded, support the Weak, and give every one his Portion.* We should oppose the Dangerous Errors, and Prevail-ing Vices, of the Time, and Place in which we live: And indeavour to set home what we deliver upon the Consciences of our People, that they may smite upon their Breasts, and say, *What have I done?* We should set before them the Terrour of the Lord, and represent unto them the Danger of resting in their Baptism, in their Priviledges, in their Zeal for Disputable Opinions, or in the External Instru-mental Duties of Religion; without getting Con-formity to God in Heart and Life.

WE ought to be Faithful, but Prudent in Repro-ving: That Sin may be disgrac'd, but the Sinner not expos'd. A Guilty Conscience is very Touchy, and will quickly take a hint.

WE should indeavour to reduce Christian Truths to Practice, and to make our Hearers know *what manner*

* *Isaiah 50. 4.* † *1 Thes. 5. 14.*

manner of Persons they ought to be, in all Holy Conversation and Godliness. We should convince them of the hainousness of their Sins, and the danger of their Neglects : Serving their Souls, not their Wills, or Lusts ; Preaching to their Hearts, not to their Fancies ; * *Not handling the Word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the Truth, commanding our Selves to every Mans Conscience in the Sight of God.* We should not rest in Generals, as in Exhorting persons to Believe in Christ, or to be Holy ; but should particularly explain these things, indeavouring to bring every thing to the Condition of our Hearers : For General Discourses have comanonly but little effect upon the Minds of Men.

V. WE ought to deliver our Sermons with all Gravity and Seriousness, avoiding antick Gestures, Screw'd and Sower Faces, Mimick Motions, and whatever offends against Modesty and Decency. We ought to be earnest, warm, and lively ; Speaking as those who Believe and Feel what we utter : Yet Shunning extravagant Loudnes, and Bawling, as well as Affected Tones and Whining. We should raise our Voice when our Matter requires it, and indeavour to awaken the Affections of our People, by our own Zeal, and Fervour. We should imitate John the Baptist, who was || *A Burning and a Shining light.* We should first burn with Zeal for God, and Love to Souls, if we would shine by Christian Instructions : Our Counsels, and Exhortations will be faint and feeble, our Reproofs flat and dull, if they do not proceed from an ardent Spirit.

THUS I have done with the *First Duty* which a Minister must perform, if He would fulfil his Ministry : He ought to *Preach the Word.*

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* 2. Cor. 4. 2. || John 5. 35.

Secondly, ANOTHER Ministerial Duty to be perform'd by us, is, *Publick PRAYER*. In this we are to be the Peoples Mouth to God ; and therefore should indeavour after an Ability to express our selves suitably to the Necessities of the Congregations in which we Officiate, and to the Providences of God towards us. We ought to search the Scriptures, to examine our own Hearts, and use the Helps afforded us, that we may get the *Gift of Prayer* : And we should stir up the Gift that is in us, that we may speak to God with such Seriousness and Devotion, as becomes those who have a Holy Aw of his Majesty upon our Hearts ; and express our selves in such a Method as is clear, and such Words as are proper, without nauseous Tautologies, ungrateful Pauses, or rambling Impertinencies.

Thirdly, HE that would fulfil his Ministry ought to *Feed Christ's Lambs*, teaching the Young and Ignorant the *Principles of Religion*, in the familiar way of *CATECHIZING*, that they may have the better relish of Preaching : For Preaching without Catechizing, is like building without a good Foundation. He that would contribute his assistance to the Reformation of the Age, must begin with the Youth, and train them up betimes in the ways of God. The main care of the Education of Children, lies upon Parents : But Ministers should not think themselves excus'd, by what they do, or ought to do. If we were more hearty in this work, if we took delight in explaining the great Truths of our Religion, to young People, their Parents and Masters would be more willing to send them, and they would be more forward to offer themselves to be Instructed : But if we do it but seldom ; if we look upon it as a Task ; if we shuffle it over carelessly,

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and in hast, no wonder if it grow more and more into disesteem and disuse: And, I am afraid, the sad effect of the Neglect of Catechizing in this Age, will discover it self in the Gross Ignorance of the next.

THIS Exercise was in great request at the REFORMATION, and did much to promote it. The Church of *Rome* was so Sensible of this, that the Council of TRENT strictly enjoins it, ordering the Bishops * if need be, to proceed against those who neglect it with Ecclesiastical Censures.

LET none of us live in the neglect of this Duty, nor perform it in a slight and careless manner. 'Tis not enough to ask the Questions of the *Catechism*, and receive the Answers: But we should shew the meaning, and help the Children, and others, to understand what they say, by proposing some other Questions, and by giving plain, short and clear, Explications of every Point.

Fourthly, HE that would fulfil his Ministry ought to administer the *Sacraments of Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. I take it for granted, that all are convinc'd, that *Baptism* should, when there is not a great Reason to the contrary, be Celebrated in the Publick Assembly; and that the *Lord's Supper* should be Administer'd frequently: Therefore I shall not inlarge here.

Fifthly, ANOTHER Ministerial Duty is watching over our *Flocks*: Visiting them, Conferring with them, Inquiring into the State of their Souls, and applying our selves to them, suitably to their particular Cases, and Conditions; Instructing, Admonishing, Reproving, Comforting them as there is occasion.

We

* Sess. 24. *Decret. de Reformat.* c. 4.

We should encourage our Hearers to resort to us, and advise with us, about the Matters of their Souls; that we may acquaint them with their Duty, resolve their Doubts, and fortify them against the Temptations with which they are assaulted. The General Counsels, and Advices which are given from the Pulpit, can't reach the Cases of particular Persons; therefore Private Conference, and Personal Instruction are very useful.

I am afraid we are Faulty in this respect. We are too apt to confine our Work, to the Publick Exercise of our Function; If we Pray, and Preach, and Administer the Sacraments, we imagine we have fulfill'd our Ministry: But the Apostles, and many Pious Ministers have given us a better Pattern *, *Teaching Publickly, and from House to House.* I can't but think on the Complaint of Mr. Hieron, on his Death-Bed: || "I confess (saith he) That in Publick I have been somewhat full i nReproo, in Admonition, in Instruction; but in Private, my Backwardness, my Bashfulness, my Dastardliness hath been intolerable: And, I may truly say, that if any thing lies as a burden upon my Conscience, this is it.

AS for the exercise of *DISCIPLINE*, so much hath been spoken here, upon a like occasion, Two Years ago, by a Learned Brother, whose Discourse is publish'd †; that I shall say but little. If we cannot well under our present Circumstances, exercise Discipline, as were to be wish'd: Yet let us supply what is wanting, as well as we can, by Pri-

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* Acts 20. 20. || Relation of the manner of Mr. Hieron's Death. + The Qualifications, Work, and Reward of Ministers; by Mr. John Sprint.

vate Admonitions ; and, if we are Backward to use the Keys, to shut out of the House of God ; let us be doubly diligent in warning, and admonishing Scandalous Sinners, that we may, if possible, bring them to Repentance. Private Reproofs, and Admonitions, if given with Seriousness, Earnestness, and Compassion to Sinners, might be of great use to reclaim them.

WHETHER Ministers have Power now, to Deliver up to Satan, and Totally to exclude from Publick Ordinances, and the Priviledges of the Church, is made a Controversy : But, that they may Admonish Offenders, and, if upon private Admonition they do not Reform, Rebuke them sharply, and Publickly, there is no doubt. And tho' We have no Power to bring Notorious Sinners to Open Penance, yet we may declare in Publick the Methods we have us'd with them in Private, and warn our People to avoid them, and have no intimate Society with them.

LET us not think that we fulfil our Ministry, if we Preach a Sermon or Two in a Week. This is no very hard Task : But the greatest difficulty lies in watching over the Flock, that we may know the State thereof, and may be able to give safe Counsel under trouble of Conscience, and suitable Directions, both in Sicknes, and in Health.

Sixthly, IF we would fulfil our Ministry, We ought to * shew our Selves Patterns of good Works. What ever Learning a Minister is Master of, how well soever He discharges the Publick Duties of his Function : Yet if a Holy, and Exemplary Life be wanting, his Learning is but as a Jewel of Gold in a Swine's

Swines || Snort. We ought therefore to watch over our Hearts, and Ways ; to take heed to our Selves, to the Temper of our Minds, and to the Course of our Lives ; to keep our Passions under strict Discipline, and to be Exemplary in our Conversations.

I.

WE ought to keep our *Passions* under strict *Discipline* ; to be Meek, Humble, and Patient ; Reproving with Gentleness, Exhorting with all Long-suffering, Condescending to Men of low Estate, and not being Wife in our own Conceit. A Proud, Huffing, Lofty Carriage, will bring upon us the Wrath of God, and the Scorn of Men : But Humility, Meekness, and Patience will make Good Men Love us, and even Bad Men Reverence, and Esteem us.

WE may have much occasion for the Exercise of these Graces ; Foward, Peevish, Captious People will try us. Some of God's Husbandmen Plant, and Prune Hedges of Briars, and Thorns : The more Pains they take, the more Pricks and Scratches they get. However they that are Faithful, and in Meekness instruct those who oppose themselves, shall not lose their Reward.

II.

WE ought to watch over our *Ways*, and to be Exemplary in our *Conversations*. Our Life should not contradict our Doctrine. 'Tis not enough that our Conversation be Blameless, and Harmless ; it ought

ought to be Eminently Holy. A good Preacher, who lives a bad Life, is fitly compar'd to the Statues of *Mercury*, set up in High-ways, which direct Passengers, but don't stir themselves. Ministers Lives are more observ'd by many than their Doctrine. There is a Generation of Men, who endeavour to make People believe that Religion is a Cheat, and Imposture: And that all the business of our Profession is to Support the Fraud. Our Office is every where spoken against. The *Contempt of the Clergy* is almost universal: And *PRIEST-CRAFT* is become a *Proverb*, and a *By-word*. Now, that we may *Magnifie our Office*, and secure our Ministry from Contempt, we ought to *shine as lights in the World*; and to live so, as to convince People that we believe what we Teach; that we are in earnest in our indeavours to save their Souls; and that we have no worse design upoa them, than to make them Holy here, and Happy for ever.

THEY who don't understand a Ministers Abilities, are shrewd Judges of his Actions. Our Office, tho' Sacred, and Honourable, will not secure us from Contempt, if we do not act suitably to it. In vain do any expect that the Dignity of their Function will command Respect, or that they shall be reverenc'd for their *Cloak*, or for their *Gown* and *Caffock*; if they want that Wisdom, and Holiness, that Gravity and Seriousness, which their Office calls for. We are design'd to be *Lights in the World*: If we fall into gross Errour, or Scandalous Sin, we shall mislead others, or cause them to stumble and fall. We ought to be the *Salt of the Earth* *; We should season Men by wholesome Doctrine, and a good

* Matth. 5. 13, 14.

good Life, that we may preserve them from the *Corruption which is in the World thro' Lust*: If Ministers lose their *Savour*, 'tis to be fear'd, the growing Putrification will eat out all Sense of Religion among us. We ought therefore to distinguish our selves from others, by our Holiness, and Circumspection, that we may do what we can to stop the Torrent of *Profaneness*, which threatens to bear down all before it.

OUR Usefulness depends upon our Reputation. If we be Loose in our Morals, Light and Vain in our Behaviour, our People will think that they may Sin with Allowance. The best Sermons lose their Efficacy, when they are not seconded by a good Example. He that Preaches up Humility, and walks in Pride, that Exhorts to Mortification, and lives in Pleasure, Tempts his Hearers to slight his Doctrine, and provokes God to render him Vile, and Contemptible in their Eyes.

BESIDES, a Minister of a Bad Life, can't Pray, or Preach with such Fervour and Earnestness, as a good Man does. He has (* as one saith) a *Clog* on his *Foot*, and a *Gag* in his *Teeth*: He can't be free, and hearty in his Exhortations, or bold, and earnest in his Reproofs. As for us, who Dissent from the *Establish'd Church*, our Faults, and Follies will be Improv'd, and Magnify'd, and we represented as unworthy of the Liberty we enjoy. If we do not lead blameless lives, our *Dissent* will be Imputed, not to *Tenderness of Conscience*, but to *Faction* and *Humour*.

THERE is a Complaint that We, especially the *Younger sort of Ministers*, degenerate from the *Stringency*,

* Bp. Taylor.

ness, Gravity, and Seriousness of our Predecessors. I know, some, out of their fondness for the Elder Ministers, seem to Envy the Younger their deserved Praise; and, instead of making just Allowances for their Age, and Temper, pick up, and improve every thing that tends to their Discredit: However, it concerns us to be very circumspect, that we may not give occasion, to those who seek it. A Right Reverend person, in his Excellent Discourse of the *Pastoral Care* *, suggested several Years ago, " That the *Dissenters* had, in a great measure, lost the good Character for Strictness, which once they had: And a late Writer † tells us, " If the *Dissenters*, on Pretence of growing acquainted, and fine Gentlemen, and the like, sink more and more into the bad Customs of the World—, I can assure 'em, without pretending to Prophecy, and, I hope, without being in this accounted their Enemy, that their growing Looseness will prove their Ruine. These Reflections, however severe, and (I hope) causeless, shou'd make us more diligent in our Studies, more constant in our Labours, and, above all, more exemplary in our Lives; that we may do what we can, to Reform what is amiss in our Selves, and in our Hearers, || that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no Evil thing to say of us. Tis not Scrupling at Ceremonies, Zeal for Purity, nor yet a demure Look, a melting Tone, or forc'd Gravity will procure us Love and Esteem, if we want real worth, or lead bad lives.

OUR present Circumstances call for great Prudence in our behaviour towards those from whom we

* p. 204.

† *Westley's Reply to Palmer*, p. 139.

|| Tit. 2. 8.

We Dissent. We ought to carry it respectfully; to avoid what would exasperate, or provoke; to abhor little *Arts* to draw Disciples after our selves: To Honour *Pious* and *Learned Conformists*; to rejoice in their *Gifts*, and *Graces*, and to Bless God for their *Success*. We should do what we can to restrain others from making *unhandsom Reflections*, upon those *Modes of Worship* which are *Legally Establish'd*. We should be thankful for our *Liberty*, and faithfully improve it; but not give any occasion to believe that *Spiteful Suggestion*, that we are *grasping at Power*, or *forming Designs* to undermine the *National Constitution*.

AS for those who are Strangers to that *Temper*, and *Moderation*, which become them as *Men*, as *Scholars*, as *Ministers of Christ*; who expose those among us that are in *HOLY ORDERS*, as mere *Lay-Men*, and *Illiterate Mechanicks*; when, at the same time, they wou'd fain deprive us of a *Learned Education*; who declaim against us as *Schismaticks*, when they are for keeping up *the Wall of Separation*, and will part with nothing in order to *Heal the Churches Wounds*; who leave us to the *uncovenanted Mercies of God*, on a Level with *Turks and Heathens*: We must not render *Railing for Railing*, but pity them, and desire God to give them a better Spirit. Far be it from us to imitate them in their irregular Heats, and Passions, or in the black *Arts of Detraction and Defamation*: Let us rather shew out of a good conversation our Works with *Meekness*, and *Wisdom*; doing good to them that hate us, and Praying for them that Reproach us; and we shall find, that a Humble, inoffensive Carriage will Confute whom we can't Convince; and Kindnes, with good Offices, is the way to make many our *Friends*, who are not our *Hearers*.

IV.

I come to Conclude with some *Particular Advice*.

I.

TO my Younger Brethren in the Ministry. I address my self to you, *O Young Men!* Not to Instruct you, but to put you in remembrance of your Duty. You are Strong, and Vigorous, of such an Age, and State of Body and Mind, as renders you most Capable to be useful in the Church. You have been Consecrated to God: Seriously consider your *Ordination-Vows*; give your selves wholly to your Work; and make full Proof of your Ministry.

LEARN the great Lesson of *Humility*, and *Self-denial*. Entertain mean Thoughts of your selves. Reflect upon your *Defects*, *Passions*, and *Follies*, that you may not be *lifted up with Pride*. When you are commended, and applauded, think thus: If I assume this Praise to my self, I may provoke God to leave me, to suffer me to fall into some gross *Error*, or *Scandalous Sin*. God may justly blast my Parts, or suffer my Reputation to be *Sullying'd*, and my Honour laid in the Dust.

MAGNIFIE your Office, and keep up your *Credit*, not by *Scorn* or *Superciliousness*, not by *Huffing* or *Hefting*, not by Strutting or Swelling, Speaking Big, or looking High, by making your People know, and keep their distance: But by *Seriousness*, and *Diligence*, by laying out your selves for the Honour of God, and the good of Souls. Reverence your selves. If you Despise your selves, no wonder if others Despise you. Eli's Sons, by their *Wickedness*, brought Contempt upon themselves, and caused

caused the offering of the Lord to be abhor'd: But John the Baptist, who was a just Man, and an Holy, was fear'd even by Proud Herod.

MARK those things which cause Offences, and avoid them. Give none Occasion to complain of you, that you Preach as if you were Disciples of Seneca, or Plato, rather than of Christ, by quoting their Works more frequently than the Inspired Writers; and by insisting so upon the Principles, and Duties of Natural Religion, as to Neglect to Instruct your People in the Doctrines of Christianity.

DO not debase the Majesty of Preaching by Reading all, or by poreing upon your Notes. Be not sluggish and dull in the Pulpit. If you Preach coldly, you will rock your People asleep: If your Words freeze between your Lips, they are not like to convey any warmth to the Hearers Hearts. Speak therefore, as those that have Authority, and not as School-boys that are saying their Lesson.

LABOUR in the Word and Doctrine. Take pains in your Studies, that you may not offer to God, and the People that which costs you little. Be frequent in Composing: And beware lest by indulging Sloth, you bring a Rust upon your Faculties. They are in danger of becoming Poor in Knowledge, and Parts, who thus deal with a slack Hand.

BE not over busie with Controversies: Neither list your selves among the Disputers of this World. Go not beyond your Depth, nor aim to get your selves a Name, by Confuting receiv'd Opinions, or opposing Men of Note and Reputation: Tho' this may gain you the Admiration of some weak Zealots, the Learned and Judicious will Pity and Scorn you, for your Pride, and Conceit. 'Tis bad for those who have but a small stock of Learning no set up the Trade of Confuting Errors.

FALL not out among your selves. 'Tis no time for United Brethren to Duel one another. Follow after the things that make for Peace. Use not the Pulpit as a Drum, to set People a Fighting about what they don't Understand. Neither espouse a Party, nor pin your Faith upon any Mans sleeve. Honestly, and Impartially search for Truth, and Love, and imbrace it wherever you find it: Yet Lean not too much to your own Understandings. Do not sacrifice Truth to Worldly Interest, nor rend the Church about Disputable matters: But if you have Faith, have it to your selves.

II.

TO Candidates. As for you, Sirs, who have been for a considerable time employ'd in Preaching, but are not yet Ordain'd: I can't Apply the Caution in my Text, To fulfil the Ministry which you have receiv'd unto you; But I wish you would at last be persuaded to ingage in it. How long shall it be ere you be solemnly Invested in the sacred Office? Do not the Necessities of many unsettled Congregations, call upon you, to fix among them as Pastors? Doth not the great Shepherd call upon you, to take the over-sight of some part of his Flock? Will you always leave his Sheep in the Wilderness, and only look upon them once or twice a Month? A Door is open'd for you. Lift up your Eyes, and look on the Fields, for they are white to Harvest *. May the Lord of the Harvest thrust you forth, and incline you to be set apart for his Service, while you have opportunity.

TO

* John 4. 35.

III.

TO such as are *Design'd*, and *Preparing* for the *Ministry*. On you (under God) the Eyes, and Hopes of *Ministers*, and serious *Christians* are fix'd. According as you are *Qualify'd* for your Work, and *Faithful* in it, the Interest of Religion among us is like either to rise or fall. Let me Exhort you, let me intreat, and beseech you to improve your time, and to be diligent in your Studies. I do not presume to Direct you what *Method* to take, what *Books* to read, with respect to *Arts* and *Sciences*: But this I would beg of you, That you would diligently Study *God's Word*, and your own *Hearts*. Let the *Bible* be your Daily Meditation, that when you enter upon your *Publick Work*, you may appear mighty in the *Scriptures*: And be much in *Secret Prayer*, that you may derive a Blessing upon your Studies.

BEHAVE your selves, as those who are intended for the Service of God, in his Church. Be *Humble* and *Modest*, *Watchful* and *Diligent*, and then there is Hope that you will hereafter be *very useful*.

LET your *Habits*, your *Gait* and *Gesture*, your *Discourses*, and all your *Deportment*, be agreeable to that *Profession* for which you design. Let none have just Occasion to say, that you are *Vain*, *Empty Fellows*. Do not practice, nor so much as plead for such things as are of *ill report*; nor frequent such *Places*, or *Company* as may lessen your Esteem among serious Christians. Abridge your selves of your *Liberty*, even in *Lawful things*, rather than give *Offence*: Be not *Fantastick* in your *Apparel*. Rather part with some *fashionable Vanities* than grieve those for whom Christ died.

YOU

YOU have many *Advantages*, may God give you Hearts to improve them, that your profiting may appear ; And, may those who Direct you in your Studies, so discharge that weighty Post, as to approve themselves *Faithful Men*, able to Teach others * also. May they be succesful in their Endeavours to furnish you with *Learning*, and to infuse into you *Loyal, Peaceable, Healing Principles*, that you may be good *Scholars*, good *Subjects*, good and able *Ministers of the New Testament*. May God increase their Abilities for this Work : And may his Favour attend them, that *Multitudes* may rise up, and call them *Blessed*.

IV.

TO the People. Prize Ministers, and Help them to Fulfil their Ministry, by your Prayers, Counsels, and Purses. There are Complaints that things are not in that good Order, which were to be wish'd ; Ministers unsettl'd, Catechizing neglected, some Congregations without fix'd Pastors to watch for their Souls : The Reason given is the small Maintenance rais'd. Formerly there was something considerable done among you, for the help of Poor Congregations. I wish, as to those of you whom God hath bless'd in the World, you may have Hearts to Honour him with your Substance. Can some Towns in the West maintain Three, or Four Ministers of their own, and yet Contribute freely towards others : And shall TAUNTON do little, or nothing ? Shall it be said, that you, who were formerly so forward, by whose Example others were excited, are grown

* 2 Tim. 2. 2.

grown weary, and have withdrawn your Necks from the Yoke? Permit me to put you in mind of your former readiness: And, I hope, your *Archippus* will call upon you to remember, and do your first Works.

IMPROVE the Labours of Ministers. If your Hearts be, at any time, affected under the Word, if Conscience begin to accuse you; don't put it off, and say, *When I have a convenient Season, I will call for thee*: Neither consult your Almanacks, to see what Day will be most proper for you to begin your Reformation; but what you do, do quickly, lest Death arrest you, lest Judgment sieze you, lest the *Angel of the Lord* smite you, as he did *Herod*, immediately, when he refus'd to give Glory to God.

AS for you, who attend upon *Dissenting Ministers*, *What do you more than others?* Look to your selves, that you may not bring a Reproach upon those with whom you joyn. Do not give occasion to any to say, that you are *Hypocrites*, or *Humorous People*: That you scruple to *Pray* by a *Form*, but not to *swear extempore*; that you can't with a safe Conscience receive the *Sacrament kneeling*, but make it your frequent Practice to drink till you cannot stand; that whereas you pretend Tenderness of Conscience, with respect to *Ceremonies*, you can *lie*, and *cheat*, and *grind the Faces of the Poor*; that you are as cunning, as false, as greedy for the World as any. Let none have just Cause to Brand you for *scrupulous Swearers, conscientious Drunkards, precise Knaves*.

BEWARE of slighting, of slandering or vilifying Ministers; either your own, or those of the *Established Church*. Take heed lest you grieve the Hearts, or weaken the Hands of your Ministers by your *Contentions*. Study the things that make for *Peace*:

Peace: Deny your selves for it; and sacrifice Private Resentments to the Publick. Let it appear that you are indued with the *Wisdom* which is from above; which is *Pure, Peaceable, Gentle, and easy to be intreated*. *Humility*, and mutual *Condescension*, would do much to compose Differences, and prevent Breaches. When *Dissenters* Quarrel and Jangle, how are the Faces of their Friends cover'd with Shame, and the Mouths of their Enemies open'd in Reproaches and Scoffs? They profess great *Purity*, but are Strangers to the way of *Peace*. They pretend to *Humility* and *Meekness*, but are as *proud* and *passionate* as any. They are ready to tear out one anothers Throats. 'Tis pity they should have *Liberty*, who make so ill an improvement of it.

I take my leave of you in the *Apostle's Valediction* to his *Corinthians*. Finally, Brethren, farewell: Be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in *PEACE*, and the God of *LOVE* and *PEACE* shall be with you.

F I N I S.

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